

Evolution of music

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



Most of the things on this world start very simply just like music. Modern philosophers opine that as man was toddling towards becoming a human being, his wonder of the universe and his own capabilities gave birth to four things – sacrament, mime, magic and music (Murthy, 2008, par. 3). It is therefore inevitable to perceive how music developed based on the progress of civilization. Each new development in music became the base to whatever it is that man can appreciate now. In the Middle Ages, music was centrally sacred in orientation and was therefore very solemn.

It was at this time that the Liturgy or mass was standardized. The motet, a short piece of music set to Latin words, and sung instead of, or immediately after, the Offertorium, or as a detached number in extra-liturgical functions (Grattan-Flood, 1911), was popular along with plainsong and Gregorian Chants. Most of the prevalent songs were related to the Liturgy. One can observe that the music of this era focused heavily on voice and not instruments. The development of secular music called the chanson can be attributed to the first troubadours or minstrels.

The chanson usually used two to three voices. The Renaissance Period is the era of prestigious accomplishments especially in music. It was at this time that music started to be associated less with religion and brought on other social themes like “ love. ” Chansons became very popular because of the troubadours but it developed into four voices. It was also at this time that instruments started gaining focus through consorts. With the development of harmony among voices and instruments, the concept of major and minor harmony and tonality was adopted during the Baroque Era.

The advent of the Protestant Reformation also changed the course of music and gave birth to cantatas and passions made for chorales. Instrumental music gained more acceptance which gave rise to sonatas, concertos and many solo instrumental compositions. The more popular instruments at this time were the harpsichord and organ which were usually enhanced by low string instruments. Theater also flourished with music in the form of the first opera, ballets and oratorios. The focus on instruments gained even more popularity during the Classical Period or Age of Enlightenment.

Sonatas, symphonies, and concertos were greatly appreciated. Composers like Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn showed their brilliance through compositions that had highly developed phrasing, symmetry, tension and contrast. It was at this period when the modern orchestra became standardized using pairs of oboes, flutes, clarinets and bassoons teamed with trumpets, horns, timpani and strings. It was also during this time that the piano was starting to gain more popularity. The revolt against rationalism gave rise to transcendentalism and promoted emotion and freedom of form.

Symphonies began to develop into the programmatic or story-telling form. Music became associated with the other arts such as literature which made the opera even more popular. This eventually led to the use of solo song (lied) and song cycles. The development of harmony and orchestra were meant to portray theatrical scenes better. The modern symphony orchestra started to adapt the bass and percussion section along with other new instruments. The central capital of music at this period was Vienna.

By 1850, musical composers began to feel the need to break away from the German music style that had become popular. Nationalism became a

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movement that made composers decide to adapt their ethnic origins, folk lore and national histories into music. This rebellious stance from performing according to the norm developed further during the Age of Impressionism. At this period, composers seemed to avoid clearly delineated melodies and focused on experimenting about dissonance and tonalities.

With the experimentation from the Age of Impressionism, collapse of politics and trouble with the European economy, music during the 20th century had strong dissonance, bitonality and irregular rhythm and meter. Schoenberg was notable for developing the 12-tone or serial wherein the music is controlled by 12 notes instead of the 8 usual notes. The popularity of film as a new medium of expression gave rise to orchestral music for these videos. The world wars and Hitler's dominance mellowed the development of music by giving rise to minimalism.

Musical compositions had lengthy repetition of very short phrases using simply melodies that had progressing harmonies. However, the development of technology also affected the music industry in the introduction of electronic instruments which gave rise to various sounds and performance styles. Music has evolved greatly along with civilization. The early sacred polyphonic music has developed into varied forms as man's societal values have also been changing. Every era added changes that have brought music to what it is today. It makes one wonder what changes will occur in the next century.

Reference

<http://www.carnatica.net/special/essay-shrikaanth.htm>

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